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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000135

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SUBJECT: (C) PUK ASAYISH HEAD - KIRKUK SECURITY WORSENING

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CLASSIFIED BY: Jim Bigus, PRT Leader, POL, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Asayish head, Hallkawt Abdullah Aziz, said on July 24 that the security situation in Kirkuk was getting worse. He said terrorists had sympathizers among the Iraqi Police (IP) officers and checkpoint guards who facilitated transit of explosives into the city. He claimed Iraqi Army (IA) commanders did not trust half their officers and that the majority of people in Kirkuk believed the IA and IP in the city were cooperating with terrorists in Baghdad. Aziz said he favored replacing certain ineffective leaders and assigning Asayish to checkpoints along the Baghdad-Tikrit-Kirkuk highway to increase security. He claimed that if Kirkuk were annexed into the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) the Asayish could solve the security situation in ten days. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

(C) KIRKUK SECURITY GETTING WORSE

¶2. (C) PUK Asayish head, Hallkawt Abdullah Aziz, told IPAs on July 24, 2006, that security in Kirkuk was getting worse due to several factors. He said first among them was the weakness of the IP in Kirkuk Province. For example, he said the Asayish had information that terrorists were going to attack the courthouse and gave this information to the IP but the attack still occurred. (Note: A cafe adjacent to the courthouse was bombed on July 23. End note.) Aziz claimed the problem was not in the northern parts of Kirkuk, where Kurdish security forces predominated, but in the southern, Arab parts of the city and province where terrorists continued to do whatever they wanted. He also claimed that each government director in Kirkuk had 10-20 bodyguards who assumed no responsibility for protecting the buildings where they operated or its inhabitants. Aziz said the majority of terrorists came from the city of Kirkuk and Amal al-Sha'bi in Hewija.

(C) WEAK LEADERS, NO TRUST IN IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

¶3. (C) Aziz said there was growing confusion between legitimate IP and terrorists because it was easy to get uniforms and impersonate IP at checkpoints. For this reason, he claimed, the public was just as afraid of the IP as they were of the terrorists. The majority of people in Kirkuk, according to Aziz, believed the IA and IP were cooperating with the terrorists, and he claimed explosives have been found in the homes of senior police who had been arrested. He added IA commanders in Kirkuk did not trust half their officers because many of them were Arabs or suspected former Baathists. Aziz

asserted that the current Police Chief, General Sherko Shirku, was weak and ineffective, but continued to remain in his position thanks to President Talabani's support.

(C) SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SECURITY

¶ 14. (C) Aziz said security on the Baghdad-Tikrit-Kirkuk highway needed to be tightened and that some captured terrorists confessed they had received IP assistance to smuggle bombs through the checkpoints on this route. He suggested sending Asayish to oversee these vital spots outside Kirkuk. In addition, Aziz said he would favor replacing IP and IA with private security companies. These companies would be assigned to protect specific cities and buildings, such as the hospital or courthouse, which Aziz said would decrease terrorist attacks because these guards were professionals trained for this purpose. He said the purpose of the IP was to eliminate crime, not terrorists. Aziz also claimed that if Kirkuk were annexed into the KRG, the Asayish could "solve the security problems in ten days." Aziz also said he favored sending the IA generals in Kirkuk to Sulaymaniyah, and vice versa, to control terrorist sympathizers in the IA. Finally, weak leaders in the security sector, such as General Sherko Shirku, must be replaced.

(C) NO COMPARISON BETWEEN KIRKUK AND BAGHDAD

¶ 15. (C) Although some Shia citizens were recently kicked out of Hewija, their small numbers in Kirkuk would prevent the Shia-Sunni conflict in Baghdad from spreading to Kirkuk, Aziz claimed. The majority of Kirkuk's Arab and Kurd population was Sunni; he said the city lacked enough Shia to fall into the sectarian struggles currently seen in the south.

(C) "DUE PROCESS" RELATIONS WITH IP AND PESHMERGA

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¶ 16. (C) Aziz said it had taken four years, but the Asayish in Kirkuk finally had an official liaison position between the Peshmerga and the IA and IP to help with security. He claimed IP and IA had authority to carry out arrests and that the Peshmerga did not arrest suspects in Kirkuk. However, he said the Peshmerga could send a letter to the IP or IA Brigadier Commander to request an arrest, and that the majority of arrested suspects were sent to Sulaymaniyah for trial. He claimed many Arab families had fled to Sulaymaniyah due to poor security and that the Asayish had taken their information and had agents in every neighborhood to watch them.

(C) KDP-PUK ASAYISH RELATIONS IN KIRKUK

¶ 17. (C) The PUK and KDP Asayish were both official forces, according to Aziz, and shared in monitoring security in Kirkuk and in providing the IP with information. Aziz said both parties' Asayish operated everywhere in Kirkuk Province and worked separately. He claimed the KRG merger would resolve this and did not anticipate problems but acknowledged the KRG ministries of Interior and Peshmerga would remain separate for now because these were the most sensitive of all KRG ministries and many obstacles for their merger remained. Aziz opined the merger of the two would not happen until after next year.

(C) ASAYISH PRESENT BELOW 'GREEN LINE'

¶ 18. (C) Aziz claimed the PUK had 1800 active Asayish officers, with an additional 400-500 assets gathering intelligence. He said the Asayish had branches in all districts and sub-districts of Kirkuk Province, and also had offices in other locations outside the formal KRG administrative borders. In Mosul the Asayish performed full security services, while in other places, such as Diyala, they worked secretly and limited their

activities to collecting information, which was then forwarded to the Director General in Sulaymaniyah. He claimed there were Asayish in Tuz Khurmatu as well, but that these fell under the control of the Asayish office in Kalar. Asayish would monitor polling centers in the disputed areas during the upcoming provincial elections, he said, to inform the IP and IA of any "irregularity."

(C) BIOGRAPHIC NOTES

¶9. (C) Halkawt Abdullah Aziz: Head of PUK Asayish, Kirkuk Province Office, located in Qarahanjer (north of Kirkuk); born in Kirkuk, 1959; joined the PUK in 1982; graduated from Qalachalan College for Military Science, 1998; Aziz claimed he led PUK Peshmerga forces into Kirkuk during Operation Iraqi Freedom and held the city for 72 hours until ordered to leave by Coalition Forces.

(U) COMMENT

¶10. (C) Neither the PUK nor the KDP Asayish leaders seemed enthusiastic about merging their security services and cooperated more out of allegiance to merger efforts within the KRG Erbil administration than any real commitment to a unified Asayish in Kirkuk (Septel). Post has noted Kurdish leaders talking more about privatization of security services in Kirkuk, by which the Kurds probably mean that Peshmerga would assume full responsibility for patrolling the city. The Kurdish leaders are also calling for Asayish to be posted at checkpoints south of the city, where we have heard reports of Arabs being turned away from coming to Kirkuk.

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